

**REMARKS OF COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS
WORKSHOP/WEBINAR ON PROPOSED EXTENSION OF OUTAGE REPORTING
AND ON NETWORK RELIABILITY AND CONTINUITY
SEPTEMBER 8, 2011**

I just want to take a minute or two to say how pleased I am that this workshop is taking place today. It's a pleasure to be here both as a Commissioner and a consumer, to see governments, service providers, advisory groups, and academics working together to tackle the single most important issue on an FCC agenda crowded with all sorts of important issues. That would be, of course, public safety. And this couldn't be a more timely workshop, coming on the heels of the events of the past couple of weeks that reminded us, very pointedly, about the importance of reliable communications during times of crisis: an East Coast earthquake, hurricanes, tropical storms and, this week-end, the tenth anniversary of the tragedy of September 11. We must use this confluence of events to find solutions that will protect our country in times of emergency. Of course it's also true that we shouldn't *need* such events to remind us of our highest duty. This should be our priority every day. My old boss, Senator Fritz Hollings, used to remind us frequently that the safety of the people is always the first obligation of the public servant.

Public safety is, of course, a private and a public responsibility. It's the responsibility of each of us—and all of us—as citizens. I am pleased that many in the private sector take this challenge seriously. Service providers, of course, have incentives to make their investments reliable, but I also believe they have taken their responsibilities to their consumers by-and-large seriously.

Yet the experiences of the past few weeks demonstrate very clearly that many citizens encountered serious communications problems. During the recent earthquake, communications in this area were seriously disrupted. Speaking personally, my daughter tried many times to call her mother and dad, but she was connected to the wrong parties at numbers she didn't call. Many people experienced lack of dial tone and connectivity. The truth is that we don't really know how networks perform until they are tested, but your job and mine is to plan as best we can and to learn from our experiences. Americans deserve no less. To that end, I was pleased to support last May's NPRM exploring network outage reporting for VoIP and Broadband services. It's long past time for us to get beyond thinking about critical communications as just traditional voice and to realize consumers don't make a lot of these distinctions that so often seem to fixate us and stymie us here in Washington, and especially they don't make them when they are in trouble and need action fast. Consumers expect to communicate using all the tools at their disposal, and certainly they expect to get and should get the critical information they need through their IP-based services.

So we share a duty to think creatively about how we can arm consumers with additional ways to communicate during disasters. While it may be somewhat beyond the scope of today's meeting, I'd raise just one example. I think the time is here for a thorough, calm and reasoned discussion about FM chips in handsets. We all acknowledge the need for redundancy in communications—especially emergency communications—and last week, during the earthquake, a lot of folks were only able to get information through radio

broadcasts when the phone networks got congested. What are the pros and cons of an FM chip? To what extent have other countries had experience with this? There will be a lot of questions to answer, but with the stakes so high, we should be open to discussing any and all reasonable ideas. And we must understand the sense of urgency that this requires, given the passing of a *decade* between 9/11 and now. Public safety has waited too long. Citizens have waited too long.

My colleagues and I look forward to your input and, again, I want thank each of you for coming here and for sharing your expertise with the Commission. As we move forward on our outage report and reliability dockets, we are going to rely heavily on your advice and counsel. Finally, I want to thank Chairman Genachowski for his leadership on these issues and Admiral Barnett and our excellent team in the Public Safety Bureau for putting this workshop together.